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Madison Opera opens 50th season with Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* **PERFORMANCES ON NOV. 5 AND 7 FEATURE INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED CAST**

Madison, Wis. – Madison Opera opens its 50th anniversary season with Mozart's classic comedy ***The Marriage of Figaro*** on Friday, Nov. 5 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 7 at 2:30 p.m. in Overture Hall. The production features an internationally acclaimed cast, with A. Scott Parry directing and Maestro John DeMain conducting.

"It was important for us to start this milestone season with a perennial favorite to really excite the community," said General Director Allan Naplan. There is a historical component as well: almost fifty years ago, a group of local singers known as the Madison Opera Workshop presented scenes from *The Marriage of Figaro* for the company's second outing. Today, Madison Opera's production will feature a professional cast with credentials at leading U.S. and international opera houses, performing on the Overture Hall stage with a striking set design most recently seen at Glimmerglass Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Pittsburgh Opera. "It just shows how much we've grown," Naplan added.

Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte based *The Marriage of Figaro* on Beaumarchais' play of the same title, and it premiered in Vienna on May 1, 1786. Set in Seville, the opera follows the servants Figaro and Susanna on what is supposed to be their wedding day. But they work in the Count's household, and he, too, has eyes for Susanna, triggering a series of events full of laughs, heartache, and ultimately, reconciliation.

Starring as the charming Figaro is bass **Jason Hardy**. A leading American interpreter of the role, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote that he "turns in a Figaro of charismatic allure, with an elegant bass." Soprano **Anya Matanovic** returns to Madison as Susanna, having triumphed this summer at Opera in the Park. Soprano **Melody Moore** stars as Countess Almaviva, arriving in Madison directly from London, where the *Daily Telegraph* recently praised her "thrillingly red-blooded singing" in a new production of *Faust* at the English National Opera. Metropolitan Opera baritone **Jeff Mattsey** sings the role of Count Almaviva, and the young mezzo-soprano **Emily Lorini**, recently seen at the Santa Fe Opera, sings Cherubino. **Michael Gallup** and **Melissa Parks** are featured as Dr. Bartolo and Marcellina, with Madison-based artists **Emily Birsan**, **James Doing**, and **Justin Niehoff Smith** completing the ensemble as Barbarina, Don Basilio, and Antonio respectively.

Tickets are currently available online at www.madisonopera.org, by phone at (608) 258-4141, and at the Overture Center Box Office (201 State St., Madison, WI). Prices range from \$16 to \$114, with student and group discounts available.

Visit <http://bit.ly/FigaroPress> to download high resolution production images and guest artist headshots. To schedule a guest artist interview, contact Brian Hinrichs at hinrichs@madisonopera.org or (608) 238-8085.

RELATED EVENTS

Oct. 23, 2010 - “Cakes” in the Rotunda (9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Rotunda Lobby at the Overture Center): Madison Opera partners with Kids in the Rotunda to offer young children the opportunity to learn about opera and have fun coloring in templates of Figaro’s wedding cake! Free to the public.

Oct. 24, 2010 – Opera Up Close: The FIGARO Preview (1 – 3 p.m., Madison Museum of Contemporary Art Lecture Hall): General Director Allan Naplan offers an engaging multimedia preview of *The Marriage of Figaro*, with musical and historical explorations, plus commentary from the cast. \$20 general admission, free with valid student ID.

Oct. 24, 2010 – Cabaret Italiano (4:30 – 8 p.m., Full Compass Systems): Embrace *la dolce vita* and join Madison Opera for this special benefit event, featuring Broadway and cabaret classics with the cast of *The Marriage of Figaro* plus a special performance by Allan Naplan and John DeMain. \$75 ticket includes silent auction, dinner, and drinks. Advance sales only. Call (608) 238-8085 to reserve by October 15.

Oct. 30, 2010 – Madison Opera Book Club (1 – 3 p.m., Sequoia Library): The Madison Opera Book Club is reading Stephanie Cowell’s charming historical novel, *Marrying Mozart*, and will meet to discuss the work.

PRODUCTION DETAILS

Stage Director: A. Scott Parry

Conductor: John DeMain

Set Designer: Benoit Dugardyn

Costume Designer: Susan Memmott Allred

Lighting Designer: Jeff Harris

Running time: Three hours, including one intermission

*Featuring the Madison Symphony Orchestra and Madison Opera Chorus
Sung in Italian with projected English translations*

CAST BIOS



Jason Hardy (Figaro) is a highly regarded singer of Mozart, described by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* as a “Figaro of charismatic allure,” and hailed for his performances as Leoporello in Christopher Alden’s new production of *Don Giovanni* at New York City Opera. Jason’s most recent operatic engagements include the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Opera Cleveland, Opera Omaha, and Opera Birmingham; Polyphemus in *Acis and Galatea* at New York City Opera; the Speaker in *The Magic Flute* with the Atlanta Opera; and Cadmus and Somnus in *Semele* with Florentine Opera. Mr. Hardy holds awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the Lyric Opera of Chicago Center for American Artists and the Heinz Rehfuss Singing Actor Competition. This is his Madison Opera debut.



Anya Matanovic (Susanna), praised as “rapturous,” by *Opera News*, is a soprano on the rise. Ms. Matanovic recently made her international debut as Musetta in *La Boheme* at the New Israeli Opera. Other notable roles include Frasquita in *Carmen* at New York City Opera and Papagena in *The Magic Flute* at Santa Fe Opera. Later this season Ms. Matanovic will perform Micaela in *Carmen* at Glimmerglass Opera; Gretel in *Hansel und Gretel* at Utah Opera; and Erste Dame in *The Magic Flute* at Seattle Opera. Ms. Matanovic is a former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice and member of the Seattle Opera Young Artist Program. Originally from Madison, she made her Madison Opera debut at Opera in the Park 2010.



Jeff Mattsey (Count Almaviva) is renowned worldwide for the signature baritone roles that have defined his prominent career. In 1998, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut in *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, and his European debut in *La Bohème* in Modena, Italy. Recent season highlights include Marco in *Gianni Schicchi*, Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette*, Schaunard in *La Bohème*, and Silvano in *Un Ballo in Maschera* at the Metropolitan Opera; Marcello in *La Bohème* with the San Diego Opera; and several roles at the Vancouver Opera. Upcoming engagements include a return to the Metropolitan Opera for *Gianni Schicchi*, *La Fanciulla del West*, *Don Carlo* and *Romeo et Juliette*. This is Mr. Mattsey’s Madison Opera debut.



Melody Moore (Countess Almaviva) is one of America’s exciting new talents. A sought after Mimi in *La Boheme*, she has performed the role with the San Francisco Opera, English National Opera and with Opera Cleveland. She recently returned to the English National Opera as Marguerite in a highly anticipated new production of *Faust*. Ms. Moore has appeared with Los Angeles Opera as the Countess Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro*; New Orleans Opera as *Manon Lescaut*; and as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at Lincoln Theatre. Later this season, she sings Rita Clayton in Stephen Schwartz’s *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* at New York City Opera. Previously with Madison Opera, she performed at Opera in the Park 2008.



Emily Lorini (Cherubino) recently completed her second season as an apprentice with the Santa Fe Opera, singing Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* and covering Nicklausse/Muse in *Les contes d’Hoffmann*. Other recent engagements include Cecily in *La Divina* and the Flower Maiden in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Opera Theater of Pittsburgh; Mercedes in *Carmen* and Dorabella Cover in *Così fan tutte* at Natchez Festival of Music; and Tebaldo in *Don Carlo* at Undercroft Opera. She holds awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and the Orpheus Vocal Competition. This is Ms. Lorini’s Madison Opera debut.



The 2009-2010 season proved to be noteworthy for mezzo-soprano **Melissa Parks (Marcellina)**, who made her Italian debut as Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* and concluded the season performing Mescalina in *Le Grande Macabre* with the New York Philharmonic. Recent performances include a reprise of the role of Mrs. Peachum in *The Beggar’s Opera* conducted by Lorin Maazel at the Castleton Festival; the Marquise de Birkenfeld in *La Fille du Regiment* with

the Opera Company of Philadelphia; and two role debuts with New Orleans Opera as Mistress Bentson in *Lakme* and Mary in *The Flying Dutchman*. Other engagements this season include Katisha in *Mikado* at Michigan Opera Theatre; and Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* at Utah Opera. This is her Madison Opera debut.



A versatile singing actor, **Michael Gallup (Dr. Bartolo)** earned praise for more than two decades as a regular guest of a number of opera companies throughout the United States. Mr. Gallup has performed the role Dr. Bartolo in either *The Marriage of Figaro* or *The Barber of Seville* at Opera Pacific, Duluth Festival Opera and Arizona Opera and in both productions at the Los Angeles Opera. Mr. Gallup has appeared in over 41 productions at the Los Angeles Opera, including as Don Alfonso in *Così fan Tutte*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Dulcamara in *L'Elisir d'amore*. Elsewhere, he has performed Leporello in *Don Giovanni* for Michigan Opera Theater, Opera Pacific, Dayton Opera, and Utah Opera. This is his Madison Opera debut.



Soprano **Emily Birsan (Barbarina)** recently earned her graduate degree in opera at the UW-Madison School of Music, where she studied with Julia Faulkner and was a Paul J. Collins Fellow. At UW-Opera, she sang the title role in *Thais*, *Alcina*, and *Maria Stuarda*. Ms. Birsan's artistry helped her to win the first award for Outstanding Female Singer and 1st place Senior Women at the 2007 National Association of Teachers of Singing competition. Following her Madison Opera debut, Ms. Birsan will enter the Lyric Opera of Chicago's prestigious Ryan Opera Center for the 2011-2012 season.



Tenor **James Doing (Don Basilio)**, a professor of voice at the UW-Madison's School of Music, has sung more than 70 operatic roles in Paris, Nice, London, Amsterdam, Brussels, New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Santa Fe, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Madison and elsewhere. Mr. Doing was a member of the Santa Fe Opera's Apprentice Program, and previously spent 11 years living and performing in the Netherlands. He was most recently seen with Madison Opera as Normanno in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (2008).



Justin Niehoff Smith (Antonio), baritone, is an award winning solo artist with a thorough performance portfolio. He is a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he participated in a host of University Opera productions, including Baron Zeta in *Die lustige Witwe*; Melisso in *Alcina*; and Cecil in *Maria Stuarda*. Prior to arriving in Madison, he attended Washington State University and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he portrayed Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Father in *Hänsel und Gretel* for the SFCM Opera Theater.



A. Scott Parry has garnered critical praise for his work in both opera and musical theatre throughout the country. He is a stage director with continuing associations with major companies across the U.S. including New York City Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Dallas Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera. He has served on the School of Music faculty at Indiana University, and regularly leads

workshops at the New England Conservatory and Amherst College. Last season's directing highlights include *Macbeth* for Des Moines Metro Opera and *La Cenerentola* for Florida Grand Opera. He recently directed *The Barber of Seville* for Pittsburgh Opera, and will lead a production of *The Elixir of Love* for New York City Opera in spring 2011. As a librettist, Parry created an English language adaptation of Beaumarchais' *La mere coupable*, which is currently being set to music. This is his Madison Opera debut.



John DeMain is the Artistic Director of Madison Opera. He is also the Music Director of the Madison Symphony Orchestra and a sought after guest conductor of orchestras and opera companies around the world. In recent seasons, he has led productions at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, and Los Angeles Opera. Most recently, he conducted the Canadian premiere of *Nixon in China* at Vancouver Opera and *Carmina Burana* and *I Pagliacci* at Portland Opera. During his distinguished tenure as Music Director of Houston Grand Opera, Maestro DeMain conducted numerous world premieres, including Bernstein's *A Quiet Place* and Adams' *Nixon in China*, as well as the American premiere of Glass' *Akhmaten*. In addition, he led a history-making production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, which he subsequently recorded for RCA and won the Grammy Award, Tony Award, and France's Grand Prix du Disque. Following *The Marriage of Figaro*, Maestro DeMain will lead Madison Opera's productions of *The Threepenny Opera* and *La Traviata*.

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Madison Opera's 2010-2011 Season: Celebrating Fifty Years continues in February 2011 with a new production of Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* starring James DeVita and Tracy Michelle-Arnold, followed by Verdi's *La Traviata* in April, featuring soprano Elizabeth Caballero and the U.S. debut of Italian tenor Giuseppe Varano. The season concludes in July with the 10th anniversary of Opera in the Park, a Madison summer tradition.